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“Dharma’s Avatars in Daily Life”

Disciplinary regimens (*vratas*) are prescribed in Brahmanical Hindu religious law (Dharma) both to confer qualification for ritual and legal agency of various types, including kingship, and as punitive and penitential legal remedies in the case of wrong-doing. Such regimens involve ascetical or restrictions, physical purifications, and rites and observances, whereby the body is transformed, serves as an indicator of social status, and constitutes an emblem for the legal order itself. In this sense, those who undergo such regimens embody, exhibit, and enact Dharma, the divinely ordained moral order.